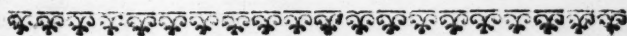


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The Rev. Dr. TUCKER,
Dean of GLOCESTER.



[Price One Shilling.]

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THE
SCRIPTURE THE ONLY TEST,
AS WELL AS
THE ONLY RULE,
OF
CHRISTIAN FAITH,

Maintained in a

LETTER

TO

The Rev. Dr. TUCKER,

Dean of GLOCESTER.

*In vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the
Commandments of Men. Matth. xv. 9.*

LONDON:

Printed for BENJ. WHITE, at Horace's Head,
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M.DCC.LXXII.

THE ONLY TEST

AS WELL AS

THE ONLY CODE

CHRISTIANITY

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The Rev. Dr. TUCKER,
Dean of GLOCESTER.

REVEREND SIR,

YOU and I are agreed, as all Protestants are, that the Scripture is the only rule of Christian Faith; and, methinks, it is hard to deny what appears to many at the first thought of it, namely, that it is the only Test of Sacred Truth revealed from Heaven. This

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seems

seems a necessary consequence of the other. For it appears needless, absurd, and even impious, to have recourse to any other test, after having acknowledged the scripture to be the only rule of christian belief. For that is using that as a rule which cannot, by your concession, be any rule at all : and if any test of sacred revealed truth, but the scripture, is thought needful, it must be because the scripture is thought imperfect, and insufficient to instruct us in religion. How reasonable, how pious, and how consistent this supposition is, let every one judge.

There is, it is granted, a sacred book, delivering, by inspiration from God, doctrines sufficient to answer all the purposes of religious instruction. The necessary consequence of which is, that he who believes these doctrines, believes enough of religion. Is it not then a monstrous and impious absurdity to add to them doctrines delivered by mere men ? and insist upon these doctrines as necessary to be received in any circumstance

cumstance of life, or as a qualification for any office in a christian church? I will suppose that of a preacher. Is such a one to be better qualified to preach by adhering to human, than to divine doctrines, or *articles*? Call them what you will. Will any one tell me so in good earnest? No. Why then this zeal for human articles of religion, when we have divine instructions, full and complete, to qualify us for heaven?

Surely, to insist upon our assent to human doctrines, is to depreciate the Scripture, and suppose it imperfect.

But you suppose the church of England will fall if subscriptions to human doctrines are not required; and therefore entitle your letter, "An Apology for the present Church of England, as by law established." If the being of the church of England depends upon human doctrines, and not entirely upon scripture doctrines, it is high time she was fallen never to rise again.

But let us hear what you say for subscriptions.

You have selected two Postulata to begin your Letter, which you hope and believe will not be controverted.

Your first is, " That all societies must
 " have some common center of Unity, and
 " be governed by some rule either expressed, or implied, written, or traditional."
 " nary."

And the second, " That those persons,
 " who are admitted members of such societies, and more especially those who
 " propose themselves to be candidates for
 " offices, and honourable distinctions in the
 " same, are to be supposed to approve of
 " this rule in the main, and this center of
 " union, whatever it may happen to be."

From both which postulata you are led to infer, " That the more important the
 " ends and uses of any society are supposed

" to

“ to be, the sooner, generally speaking,
 “ will such an institution arrive at an ac-
 “ quisition of temporal possessions, because
 “ divers persons, either in their life-time,
 “ or at their decease, will think it expe-
 “ dient, out of a principle of zeal, of emu-
 “ lation, or perhaps from less laudable mo-
 “ tives, to subscribe sums of money, or to
 “ give lands, or leave legacies for the sup-
 “ port and encouragement of such im-
 “ portant institution.” You add, “ Nor
 “ is it in the power of the civil magistrate,
 “ even when he disapproves of these bene-
 “ factions, totally to prevent them.” But
 I shall not dispute the reasonableness of a
 man’s disposing of his property as he pleaseth.
 What I maintain is, that the scripture is
 the only test of christian doctrine; and
 therefore it is both absurd and impious to
 offer any other test of it.

You own the doctrine of scripture is di-
 vinely inspired; and, I believe, will hardly
 deny that it is complete, and sufficient to
 teach us the will of God. Will you then
 assert,

assert, that it wants *mending* by human wisdom? Surely no. But then how can we possibly need the assistance of such wisdom to mend it, or supply its defects? Or, for what other reason should such doctrines be established, and required as tests of orthodoxy, or true religion?

I shall ever, I hope, be sufficiently in my senses, and enough acquainted with the religion I profess, to take my christian orthodoxy from scripture only; and despise and abhor all pretences of orthodoxy not taken from thence, the authority of all creeds and articles, to determine any christian truth.

The supposition that the civil magistrate "ought to be devoid of all religious sentiments," is entirely your own. Name me a sect that supposes any such thing.

"All societies," you say, "must have some common center of union, and must be governed by some rule, either expressed

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“ pressed or implied, written or traditional.” This is your first postulatatum. And you say, in consequence of this, we “ must likewise admit of creeds, articles, and subscriptions, under some shape or other, or of something equivalent to them; for these are nothing else but so many rules of conduct, and centers of union.”

I cannot imagine why we must have creeds, articles, and subscriptions, or something equivalent to them, unless you will allow the words of scripture to be equivalent to human creeds, articles, and subscriptions, which, methinks, is no great thing to grant in favour of scripture. I cannot forbear thinking the words of scripture infinitely more than equivalent to any or all these. The insisting upon an assent to them is the very thing our Saviour himself condemns in a quotation from Isaiah, namely, *Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

He

He that believes the scripture, believes enough: nor can any opinions or *doctrines of men* add any authority to a scripture doctrine. It is therefore needless, absurd, and even impious, to demand an assent to human opinions and doctrines otherwise than as they are proved to the satisfaction of those to whom they are proposed. It is usurping the authority of God himself, who alone has a right to demand our assent to what he dictates, either immediately, or mediately by some inspired person.

Will you say, the scripture is not a sufficient rule or bond of connection to any society; or that it is not strong enough without the help of human opinions or inventions?

What saith St. Paul with regard to the doctrines of the Jews and Heathens? *The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the*

the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men ; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
 1 Cor. i. 22, 23, 24, 25.

The apostle, we find, was content with the doctrine of Christ : nor had he the least suspicion of its needing the opinions or determinations of men to add to its strength or authority.

You suppose, p. 15, a design to form a church, or religious society, on the principles of natural religion *only* : and ask, what human creed, or what system of faith, the person you write to would wish to adopt on that occasion ? You add, “ To say that
 “ every person, who was to teach, or pre-
 “ side in that assembly, should engage, to
 “ teach nothing but what appeared to him
 “ to be true, and agreeable to right Reason,
 “ is nothing to the purpose : for all the
 “ different sects that ever were, or ever
 C “ will

“ will be in the world, might equally
 “ become the members, and some of them
 “ the pastors of such a comprehensive, la-
 “ titudinarian church. Nay, there is no-
 “ thing in the terms of this engagement,
 “ which could exclude even an Atheist
 “ from inculcating his atheistical doctrines
 “ publickly in this religious assembly. For
 “ even he could subscribe to the terms that
 “ were required, as unfeignedly as the rest,
 “ viz. That he would teach nothing but
 “ what appeared to him to be true, and
 “ agreeable to right reason.”

Suppose an atheist (which is not likely,
 and I believe there are very few, if any
 such persons) suppose, I say, an atheist to
 deliver his doctrines in such an assembly,
 he would soon be confuted and exposed,
 and consequently discouraged, by one or
 other sensible member of such a society,
 as would any maintainer of manifest absur-
 dity. Or, if such a one, after being evi-
 dently confuted, and having nothing new
 to say, should persist, and inculcate his
 nonsense,

nonsense, he would offend against good manners, as well as common sense, and therefore, if not to be silenced by a decent and civil remonstrance, be fairly and reasonably turned out of any assembly in which he should be thus impertinent: and this might be done without the help of either creed or system.

In natural religion, if any one teaches what he cannot prove, he is not likely to have many to teach. All instruction in that must depend upon evidence; and it would be very absurd to demand any one's assent to what you do not prove to his satisfaction.

And where there is sufficient proof, no creed can be needful, or operate at all, to make it stronger; and where proof is wanting a creed cannot but be ridiculous. Nor am I sensible of what use a creed ever was, or can be, unless to employ our minds upon serious subjects, and put us in mind of what we are already fully con-

vinced of. It can prove nothing; it can confirm no truth; and I think, history abundantly shews that creeds have done more harm than good.

When you come to consider the case of the gospel, you ask thus, "What is there
 " in the whole system of revelation, that
 " either forbids or discountenances the use
 " of creeds, and confessions of faith? Nay,
 " how comes it to pass, that *that* method
 " for the prevention of error, which is so
 " plainly a *duty*, according to the best light
 " of nature, is converted into a *crime*, if
 " practised under the dispensation of the
 " gospel?

And pray, Sir, shew me how it is possible for a creed, or all the creeds in the world, to prevent error; or that any error was ever prevented by a creed or creeds, *et eris mihi magnus Apollo*. Can mere confessions, mere declarations, prove any thing, or convince either the knowing or the ignorant?

You

You say, " The commands of scripture
 " plainly refer to some certain compen-
 " dium of the gospel, that is, to some par-
 " ticular creed, or confession of faith, what-
 " ever it was, *which was once delivered to*
 " *the saints*. For evident it is, that when
 " saint Jude used these words, *the faith*
 " *delivered to the saints*, he could not pos-
 " sibly mean the gospel at large, or all the
 " books of the New Testament." And must
 it therefore follow that he cannot but mean
 some creed? Why cannot he mean what
 is commonly called the faith in the New
 Testament, namely, the christian religion?
 This may be called *the form of sound words*
which Timothy had heard of Paul, [2 Tim.
 i. 13.] as well as *the faith which was once*
delivered unto the saints, for which Jude re-
 quired christians to *contend earnestly*, v. 3.

But suppose the apostles Paul and Jude
 referred to some compendium of the gospel,
 which you call a creed, or confession of
 faith. This compendium was truly aposto-
 lical

lical and divinely inspired. None of the apostles say, you should give a solemn assent, or subscribe, to any mere human doctrine or opinion: the doing which can be of no real use in religion, nor in true policy.

You thus deliver an objection of him to whom you write, p. 23. "But creeds." you say, "especially *modern* creeds, are composed by fallible men, whereas the scriptures are the words of the infallible God." You answer, "Granted; but the original scriptures themselves were transcribed by ancient copyists; and they are now printed by modern and fallible printers."

And will you say in good earnest, that these cases are parallel, or not widely different? If you say, they are parallel, you profess as great a regard to human opinions, as to the scriptures. If they are not parallel, your answer is of no force. What-
ever

ever signification it has, tends to lessen the authority of scripture, and represents the meaning of it as doubtful and precarious.

You ask thus, p. 24. " Is the creed, or
 " confession of faith, to which you object,
 " because composed by fallible men ; (what-
 " ever it be) — is it true, or false in it-
 " self ? " and you add, " If it be true, it
 " contains a scripture meaning, upon a sup-
 " position, that the scriptures are the truth
 " of God ; — though perhaps the very
 " identical phrases are not to be found in
 " scripture. But on the other hand, if you
 " can prove it to be false, and contrary to
 " scripture ; — what need of further con-
 " troversy ? For we are both agreed, that
 " a false, or an unscriptural creed is not to
 " be defended."

If your creed be true and has a scriptu-
 ral meaning, your creed cannot but be need-
 less, because the words of scripture would
 do at least as well as any words used by
 uninspired persons. And it is no decent
 regard

regard paid to the scripture, to substitute the words of fallible men in the room of those contained in the sacred writings. This necessarily supposes some deficiency in the words of scripture: which is not a very pious supposition; and would rather become a profest unbeliever, than one who calls himself an orthodox christian. And you and I are agreed, *that a false, or an unscriptural creed, is not to be defended.*

You proceed thus, p. 23. *“ But creeds,”* you say, *“ especially modern creeds, are composed by fallible men; whereas the scriptures are the words of the infallible God. — Granted: But the original scriptures themselves were transcribed by ancient fallible copyists; and they are now printed by modern and fallible printers. They were likewise translated by modern and fallible translators: this translation was enjoined to be publickly used by a modern and fallible authority; and the several copies of it now in use were printed by a set of printers still more modern, and not one jot more infallible.”*

them, must be rejected, if we reject human creeds because men are fallible?

It is impossible that the mere blunders of copyists or printers, or of both these sorts of men, can so hide the meaning of a book, that the reader cannot find it out in general, though some passages may be obscured by them, perhaps so obscured as to be unintelligible.

It is agreed by Protestants, and allowed by some Papists, that every doctrine necessary to salvation is plain in the scripture to the meanest understanding; and if so, what need can we have of any human authority to enforce religious doctrines? The plain rules of life laid down in scripture, and the motives there urged to a good life, may be, and are happily inculcated by learned and good divines. And I cannot forbear thinking, that such are more likely to succeed in persuading men to live well, by urging the authority of God, than that of men, and quoting scripture,
than

than quoting any of the Thirty-nine Articles.

As for the clergy's preaching doctrines different from those of one another, which is urged as a consequence of not obliging them to subscribe to those articles; have not they preached different doctrines at all times, and in all places? I do not mean that they have contradicted one another in essential, or very important points. But we know, *many men, many minds*, and that no two people think exactly alike, but that we widely differ from one another in our opinions on every subject upon which it is possible to differ. And yet our wise forefathers required men to be of one opinion; and established our thirty-nine articles, *for avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent concerning true religion*: [title to the articles] that is, for doing what every body knows cannot be done.

And will any one tell me that any person but a predestinarian can either at the first reading, or after mature deliberation, assent without hesitation or scruple to these same articles? Compare them with the scripture, and observe the infinite difference. Many of these cannot but shock an unprejudiced person at the first view: nor do I doubt they would shock *you* if you were not used to them, and they did not bear the pleasing name of articles of the church of England. I believe, you as well as others, would be greatly disgusted on hearing many propositions delivered from the pulpit in terms of your favourite articles. I do not find that they are often quoted by our divines, however strictly orthodox in the doctrines of men, and ready to join *them* with the doctrines of God, if not to give them the preference, as more intelligible.

In article the 18th, it is declared, that
 “ Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever
 “ is not read therein, nor may be proved
 “ thereby,

" thereby, is not to be required of any
 " man, that it should be believed as an
 " article of the faith, or be thought re-
 " quisite or necessary to salvation. In the
 " name of the holy scripture, we do un-
 " derstand those canonical books of the
 " Old and New Testament, of whose au-
 " thority was never any doubt in the
 " church."

And, that there may be no mistake of
 the sense and meaning of this declaration,
 all the books of the Old Testament are
 named, as they are found in the bible.
 And it is added, " All the books of the
 " New Testament, as they are commonly
 " received, we do receive, and account
 " them canonical."

This, I think, every christian would
 readily subscribe to. And could any stran-
 ger, who did not know, that the clergy
 and many others, are required to subscribe
 to thirty-eight articles more, suspect any
 such thing; or think it at all consistent with
 this declaration?

It

It is somewhat strange that it should be apprehended, that the requiring no subscription to human doctrines should destroy, or at all hurt the church of England. Is reformation and destruction the same thing? or can reformation do any harm?

It is no credit to the church of England to suppose, that requiring no subscription to any thing but the bible, will hurt it; and seems to insinuate that something not to be found in the bible, is necessary to maintain it. Let any one that will, undertake to defend all the articles so much pleaded for, in their most obvious meaning; if some of them have any meaning at all.

Nor can I think there will be that disturbance, which some seem to apprehend, if they are entirely removed.

They have been long complained of by men of the best understanding, and the greatest integrity. And methinks, he doth not show a sufficient regard to the scripture,

ture, who thinks it not a sufficient test of true religion. And thus every one must think who believes any other test needful on any account. Suppose the question was fairly asked thus, Do you believe the scripture a sufficient test of sacred truth, or not? It is somewhat difficult to suppose a pious christian to answer, No. But, why should such a one be ashamed to give that answer, if there be no impiety, nor absurdity in it? But one would think a christian must see both at the first view of it. Let this plain question be asked, and fairly answered, and then contend for any other test of orthodoxy if you can.

If the wickedness and folly of men were not notorious in numerous and various instances, one would be apt to wonder, that any should offer to supply the supposed defect of instructions from heaven, which instructions they themselves acknowledge not only to come from heaven, but also to be compleat, and sufficient to guide us thither; to supply, I say, the supposed defect
of

of these, which yet they own to have no defect at all, with human compositions, the doctrines of mere men. Yet, this is done even by pious and learned men, who cannot do it without the grossest inconsistency with themselves.

But many are apprehensive of the most dangerous, and even destructive contentions, of the greatest and most dreadful disorder and confusion, if no one should be obliged to subscribe to the articles.

I am sensible of the mischievous effects of bigotry; and that the word church, will excite the zeal of many, who do not understand the meaning of it. But, as I have already said, I do not apprehend such disturbance and disorder, as some think will probably follow from the removal of the articles. I think, government is strong enough to prevent, or easily to suppress a rebellion; and that the complaints of ignorant and wrong-headed men, who do not sufficiently know how to value and use
the

the scripture, would soon be at an end and forgot. The alteration proposed is so reasonable and so small, that I doubt not we should all soon acquiesce in it. Nor can I think that we are sufficiently reformed without it. Can we be so whilst we *teach for doctrines the commandments of men*, and insist as much upon human authority, even in religion, as divine?

And pray, what good have these favourite articles ever done us, or can they do us? Do they instruct us? No. It is owned, we find, in one of them, that the scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: and we may well conclude it does, because it came from God, and was given by him to prepare us for heavenly felicity. Can we then set too great a value upon it? and should we suppose human opinions and instructions of equal weight and importance with the word of God, and require the assent of men to the former, as much as to the latter? Is not this depreciating the scripture, and every way unworthy of a christian?

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Our

Our blessed Saviour spared no pains to persuade men to be members of his church; yet too many christians had rather retain what they cannot fairly deny to be very exceptionable, than admit learned and pious men into the church, or into the ministry of it, who scruple to comply with such a thing.

We ought to be more cautious of adding our own opinions and conceits to the word of God, than of offending men by not complying with their notions, or assenting to their doctrines. And if all men were so, no one would be stiff and obstinate in requiring others to subscribe to what he himself acknowledges not to be necessary to salvation. Whoever acts thus, contradicts himself: for if what he requires another to subscribe to, be not necessary to salvation, what reason can he give for requiring the subscription?

St. Paul most justly cautions us against causing a weak brother to offend: and, methinks

methinks, they should take particular notice of his caution who are resolved not to part with that which they themselves cannot heartily approve of, to satisfy the consciences of men who might be great ornaments, and of great use, to our church, which church these persons are zealous for.

It is reasonable to give up something of real value, rather than hinder persons of worth, and such as would do much good in an office, from accepting of the office.

It is no credit to any society to be afraid of being reformed and made better, or to part with any thing that is inconvenient and disgraceful to it. And this is certainly the case of our thirty-nine articles, which can do us no good, which give offence to wise and good men, and are a standing disgrace to us.

The more strictly our church adheres to the doctrines of scripture, and the more careful and zealous she is in maintaining the dignity and use of these doctrines, and

not suffering any other doctrines to be considered as of equal worth, authority, and use, with these; the more pure and perfect a church she is, the more to be esteemed and valued. And therefore it is very absurd to think she can be any way injured and disgraced by removing a nuisance, a set of articles which were never of any use to her, and the very requiring subscription to which is a disparagement to the scripture.

It is a perpetual reflection upon our understanding, or our integrity, to require subscription to that which we own is not scripture, and which we have reason to be ashamed of.

It is not to be expected that such imperfect and defective creatures as we are should be reformed entirely, and all at once, from gross errors and absurdities contracted by degrees, and long continued.

The authority of the church to dictate doctrines to be received and maintained, is
the

the very foundation of popery. From this usurpation of the authority of Christ proceed all the corruptions of the church of Rome, which have so defiled and disguised her, that it is difficult to discern her to be a christian church. She takes upon her to interpret the scripture for her members and devotees; and we are continually blaming her for it. But do we not the same when we appoint doctrines or articles to be received and subscribed, and insist upon the reception and continuance of them, and subscription to them?

It is urged, that if subscription to them is no longer insisted upon, there will be variety of doctrines and opinions delivered by different preachers. And is it not so now? and was it not always so? Is it not so even amongst the papists? Do they, with all their boasted union, agree in interpreting the scripture? Have not they various sects and opinions in their church?

You cannot but be sensible that commentators of character and eminence differ
from

from one another: nor can you expect it to be otherwise as long as they are men. Nor is there the least probability of more difference of opinion, or more freedom taken in delivering such difference from the pulpit or the press, if we were got well rid of our articles, than there is now.

We all claim and make use of the right of speaking and writing as we think, tho' we sometimes deny it to one another. Let us be ingenuous, and freely suffer one another to use the liberty we, on all occasions, use ourselves.

And, pray, of what use are our articles if they restrain no one from speaking or writing his opinion, as is most evidently the case? And if they restrain any person from one or the other, they probably would do more harm than good; they would abridge the liberty we all claim for ourselves, however unwilling some of us are to grant it to others.

The

The cause of truth cannot suffer from free inquiry. It was that which delivered us from popery ; it is that which improves all arts and sciences ; and without it men are more or less barbarians.

Every discouragement to this is an affront to reason and common sense ; and proceeds from mere ignorance, or insolent tyranny. This we are plainly sensible of when we feel the effects of it ourselves ; and are therefore greatly pitiable for our ignorance, or entirely inexcusable for our barbarity, if we refuse others the liberty of enquiry, in any degree, or lay any restraint upon them from using their reason and understanding for the encrease of their knowledge, and improvement of their minds. .

Why should we be afraid of knowing too much, or discourage any one from farther enquiries than he has hitherto made ; especially in religion, the best and noblest employment of our reason, and the greatest
glory

glory of our nature? We need not fear being too knowing, too wise, or too good. Nor should we endeavour to hinder others from making still farther improvements and advancements in the best and most important kind of knowledge; nor tie them down to particular opinions or doctrines, whether true or false, which is as much as to say, Hitherto you shall go, and no farther; you shall not be wiser or more knowing than these doctrines will permit you to be; which probably will not be going far in knowledge. For he who can think this reasonable, doth not seem to have gone far himself; or at least not to have seen clearly, and judged well of things; or (which is much worse) must be of a tyrannical disposition, and resolved to enslave the souls and understanding of others:

He who has a just sense of the infinite value of religious knowledge, and at the same time such a share of humanity as every one ought to have, will be very cautious of doing any thing that tends to hinder improve-

improvement in the knowledge of religion. And every christian should be careful to avoid that which at all depreciates the holy scripture, or which may lessen the regard that every one ought to pay to sacred doctrines. And doth not the requiring the same regard to the words of men, which we pay to those of God, or requiring subscription to the former as strictly at least as to the latter, put them upon a par, and treat them as equally sacred? Is this pious, just, or rational?

And why should we be so very cautious as many of us are of making alterations; or at all afraid of altering for the better? I do not see any harm mere alterations can do us. If we change any thing for what is barely as good, we are but where we were, and have only given ourselves needless trouble. If we change for something better, we gain an evident advantage by the change, and therefore it would be absurd to object to it. And if we only lay

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aside

aside what is entirely needless and useless, we certainly act wisely; and if we part with that which is not only useless, but subjects us to difficulty and inconveniences, we act more wisely still, and must soon find relief and advantage from our prudent conduct.

This is most evidently our case: we are incumbered with a parcel of articles that can do us no good, that can make us neither wiser nor better; and, it is well known, have exposed the clergy to severe reflections as subscribing to what they cannot believe, if they fairly consult either reason or scripture. Methinks we should be glad to get rid of such an incumbrance; and if we are sensible of our own interest, or that of the church, we certainly shall.

Can any good reason be thought of why we should not content ourselves with the scripture as the only rule of our faith; and

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and make an infinite difference between the doctrines of God and those of men? Are we not as safe, and as likely to avoid error, by adhering punctually to instructions from heaven, as by assenting and subscribing to doctrines or articles, delivered by those whom we know to be fallible?

They may call them scripture doctrines. Suppose they are so: are they not as well and as plainly express'd in scripture as all the wisest men upon earth can express them? And if so, is it not better, more just, more decent, more pious, and more safe, to take them from the word of God, than from the instructions of men?

It is going much farther than I dare go, to insist upon any human instructions as much, as upon those of the bible, and contend as strenuously for them. And it seems, at the first view, to be much farther

than any man ought to go; and may he who goeth so far have no follower.

As we are christians, we should be guided rather by the scripture, than any instructions not taken immediately from thence. As far as we act according to the instructions of scripture, we are certainly safe, and in the right. But when we take any other guide, we may err and wander out of the way of truth and piety.

As long as we have our bible, we have a sure guide to heaven. But can we say the same of fallible men? and is it rational and just to depend entirely upon the truth of what they say?

What reason can be given why we should not depend rather upon scripture doctrines, than any other, for sacred truth? Is it not indeed most evidently absurd to pay as great a regard to what is said by fallible men, as what is said by the infallible God?

Let

Let men interpret the scripture as they can; and express their sense of it with the utmost freedom: this tends to our improvement in the knowledge of the sacred writings. But let none claim an assent to their interpretations, but upon fair conviction, and satisfactory proof; nor command an assent or subscription to any doctrine of those whom they own to be fallible.

This is an affront to our understanding; and even more absurd than the demand the papists make of our assent to the doctrines of their church, because they declare that church to be infallible.

Let us be consistent with ourselves as christians, and as protestants: which we cannot be if we insist upon an implicit belief of any thing, but the bible. And we may satisfy ourselves in our adherence to that, when we understand it as well as we can, and do our best to live up to the commands of it,

Nor

Nor need we fear any bad consequence of permitting others to interpret the holy writings in their own way, since we are at liberty to answer them if we think them mistaken. And indeed, with what face can we refuse this liberty to others, whilst we claim it for ourselves?

I am fully persuaded that no harm, but much good, will be consequent upon demanding no assent or subscription to human doctrines, but leaving them to be received or rejected, as they may deserve, or the hearers or readers of them may think they deserve. And surely no christian will say, that we can think or speak too highly of the holy scripture.

Let us ever distinguish justly between human and divine writings, and retain a just abhorrence of depreciating the latter, even in our thoughts, and of paying near so great regard to the opinions of men, as to the doctrines of God.

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Let us, on all occasions, discourage every usurpation of the authority of God and Christ; and suffer no fallible man to dictate religion to us; but take our religion from the bible, and be content with that, and thankful for it, read it carefully, and use the rational means of understanding it, and never be enslaved by the doctrines of those, who *teach for doctrines the commandments of men.*

I am, REVEREND SIR,

Your humble Servant.

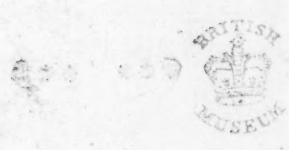
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F I N I S.

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 ments of God.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your humble servant,



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